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BROWNBACK INTRODUCES DOMESTIC CARBON STORAGE ACT OF 2000

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback has introduced the Domestic Carbon Storage Incentive Act of 2000 – which would provide financial incentives to landowners who increase conservation practices which help pull carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and store it as carbon in the soil. Joining Brownback in introducing the bill were U.S. Sens. Bob Kerrey (NE) and Frank Murkowski (AK).

“We are on the verge of seeing agriculture come into a whole new market – an environmental market – where producers will benefit rather than be burdened by environmental concerns,” Brownback said.

“U.S. agriculture has long been appreciated for its ability to feed the world. But as any good farmer knows, in order to grow good crops, you must take care of the land. Farmers take this role very seriously, but sometimes markets and economic stress make conservation too difficult to pursue. The legislation we have introduced would help offset some of the cost to expand conservation practices.

“It is this eco-agriculture that we should encourage and enhance to deal with environmental concerns rather than resorting to government regulations and mandates to solve our problems. Farmers want to do the right thing – they have more reason than anyone to preserve and protect the land, water and air – but government and markets do not always make that job easy.

“My approach to environmental stewardship encourages offsetting greenhouse gases through improved land management and conservation. As a result, these practices will also lead to better water quality, less runoff pollution, better wildlife habitat and an additional revenue source for farmers. It is a win-win proposition for agriculture and the environment.

“Agriculture can play a substantial role in protecting the environment, but we must reward conservation practices which help clean the air and water – and offset global warming – instead of merely focusing on costly regulations which penalize land owners in the name of the public good.

“There are so many benefits which carbon storage will provide. The total carbon sequestration and fossil fuel offset potential of U.S. crop land is currently estimated at 154 million metric tons of carbon per year or 133% of the total greenhouse gas emissions by agricultural land and forestry activities. Additionally, early estimates indicate that the potential for a carbon market for U.S. agriculture could reach \$5 billion per year for the next 30 - 40 years.

“Carbon sequestration has a great deal to offer. We must provide both more research and outreach to landowners on this win-win environmental and agricultural policy,” Brownback said.